

A Review on Food and Feeding Habits of the Common Myna, *Acridotheres tristis* (Linnaeus, 1776)

Dr Vikas Sikerwal

Department of Zoology, Pt. Chiranjilal Sharma Government College, Karnal, Haryana, India - 132001

Email: vikas17sikerwal@gmail.com

Abstract: The Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) is a highly adaptable omnivorous bird known for its diverse diet and opportunistic feeding behaviour. This review synthesizes current knowledge on its food preferences and feeding habits, drawing from studies across its native and introduced ranges. The species consumes a wide variety of foods, including insects, fruits, grains, small vertebrates, and human food waste, with seasonal and environmental variations influencing its diet. Its ability to exploit diverse food sources, including anthropogenic resources, contributes to its success as an invasive species. This paper examines dietary preferences, foraging behaviours, and ecological implications, highlighting the Common Myna's role in agricultural and urban ecosystems.

[Sikerwal, V. **A Review on Food and Feeding Habits of the Common Myna, *Acridotheres tristis* (Linnaeus, 1776)**. *The International Journal of Interpretation, Observation and Analysis*, 2025; Volume 2, Issue 1:86-88 (April-June). ISSN 2349-0713, Peer-reviewed (online/offline), Refereed, Indexed and International Journal (Since 2013), Global Impact Factor: 5.776

Keywords: Literature, Food and Feeding Habits, Common Myna

Introduction: The Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), a member of the Sturnidae family, is characterized by its brownish body, glossy black head, neck, and upper chest, white wing patches, and bright yellow beak, legs, and eye patches (Massam, 2001). Native to southern Asia, this species has been introduced globally to temperate and tropical regions due to its adaptability and agricultural benefits, so known as 'farmer's friend' for its consumption of insect pests (Feare and Craig, 1998). Common Mynas are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on insects, arachnids, crustaceans, small vertebrates, seeds, grains, fruits, and human food scraps (Feare and Craig, 1999). They forage primarily on the ground, targeting insects like grasshoppers, but also consume flower nectar, berries, and crops such as maize, wheat, and rice. Their adaptability to human-modified environments allows them to exploit resources in urban areas, farmlands, and coastal regions. This review explores the dietary habits, foraging behaviours, and ecological impacts of the Common Myna, with an emphasis on its role in both native and invasive contexts.

Review of Literature

Dietary Composition

The Common Myna exhibits a broad dietary range, consuming both animal and plant matter. Historical studies, such as those by Jerdon (1863), Mason and Maxwell-Lefroy (1912), and Baker, (1926), emphasize insects as a primary food source, particularly grasshoppers, termites, beetles, and earthworms. Whistler (1949), observed food items,

including fruits, frogs, lizards, and flower nectar. More recent studies confirm this diversity, noting seasonal variations in food availability (Soomro *et.al.*, 2016). In agricultural settings, Common Mynas feed on ripening fruits e.g., figs, papayas, dates, apples, pears, tomatoes and cereal crops e.g., maize, wheat, rice (Feare and Craig, 1998). They also prey on small vertebrates, including bird eggs, nestlings, and lizards, and scavenge human food waste in urban environments (Kaur and Dhanju, 2013). Coastal populations exploit marine resources such as worms, molluscs, and crustaceans during low tide (Invasive Species Specialist Group, 2006).

Foraging Behaviour

Common Mynas typically forage in pairs or small family groups on the ground, though larger flocks may gather in trees or shrubs (Australian Museum, 2003). They are surface feeders, targeting ground-dwelling invertebrates in ploughed fields, pastures, and urban areas (Kaur and Dhanju, 2013). Feeding often occurs near roosting or nesting sites, within a 100-meter radius (Invasive Species Specialist Group, 2006). In urban settings, they exploit anthropogenic food sources, such as pet food, garbage, and discarded human food (Machovsky *et.al.*, 2016). Seasonal variations influence foraging patterns. These patterns reflect the availability of seasonal food sources, with insects and fruits dominating in warmer months and grains in colder periods.

Nutritional Preferences

Studies on macronutrient preferences provide insight into the Common Myna's dietary choices. Machovsky *et.al.* (2016) used the right-angled mixture triangle model to demonstrate a preference for high-protein foods over high-lipid or high-carbohydrate foods in urban populations. Feeding trials showed that mynas selectively consumed high protein pellets, even in mixed feeders, suggesting a protein deficiency in their natural diet (Peneaux *et.al.*, 2017). Similarly, Gumedede and Downs (2020) found a preference for high-lipid food over high-protein and high-carbohydrate options in captivity, though further research is needed to confirm these findings in wild populations. The ability to evaluate and select novel foods based on nutritional content is a key factor in the Common Myna's invasion success. Peneaux *et.al.* (2017) recorded that Myna readily consumed novel High Protein foods in higher quantity than familiar foods, indicating a capacity to prioritize protein-rich diets. This adaptability allows them to exploit temporary or seasonal food sources, enhancing their survival in diverse environments.

Ecological and Agricultural Impacts

The Common Myna's omnivorous diet has significant ecological and agricultural implications. By consuming crop pests, it provides benefits to agriculture, as observed by Sengupta (1976), who reported that food of the bird was insects 81.4% by weight supplemented by the fruits and flower nectar during some seasons of the year. Common Mynas prefer edge habitats over interior woodlands, with feeding activity peaking during the breeding season (Pelland Tidemann, 1997). Their communal roosting behavior enhances foraging efficiency and predator avoidance, contributing to their success in urban ecosystems (Kulabong and Mahaprom, 2015).

The Common Myna's dietary flexibility and opportunistic feeding behaviour underpin its success as both a native and invasive species. Its ability to exploit a wide range of food sources, from insects and small vertebrates to fruits, grains, and human food waste, allows it to thrive in diverse environments. Seasonal variations and macronutrient preferences further enhance its adaptability, enabling it to meet nutritional needs in dynamic

ecosystems. While beneficial to agriculture through pest control, its crop consumption and competition with native species pose challenges. Further research is needed to understand its long-term ecological impacts and inform management strategies in invaded regions.

References

- Australian Museum. (2003). Common Myna, *Acridotheres tristis*. Available at: <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au>.
- Baker, E.C.S. (1926). Fauna of British India: Birds, Vol. 3. Taylor and Francis, London.
- Feare, C., and Craig, A. (1998). Starlings and Mynas. Christopher Helm, London.
- Feare, C., and Craig, A. (1999). Starlings and Mynas. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Gumedede, S.T., and Downs, C.T. (2020). Preliminary observations suggest Common Myna prefer lipid over protein and carbohydrate foods in a pairwise choice experiment. *Ostrich*, 91(1), 95–100.
- Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG). (2006). *Acridotheres tristis*. Global Invasive Species Database.
- Jerdon, T.C. (1863). The Birds of India, Vol. 2. Military Orphan Press, Calcutta.
- Kaur, N., and Dhanju, C.K. (2013). Food and feeding habits of common birds of agroecosystems. *Indian Ecological Society*, 40, 83–86.
- Kulabong, S., and Mahaprom, R. (2015). Observation on food items of Asian water monitor, *Varanus salvator* (Laurenti, 1768) (Squamata Varanidae), in urban ecosystem, Central Thailand. *Biodiversity Journal*, 6(3), 695–698.
- Machovsky-Capuska, G.E., Senior, A.M., Zantis, S.P., Barna, K., Cowieson, A.J., Pandya, S., and Raubenheimer, D. (2016). Dietary

protein selection in a free-ranging urban population of common myna birds. *Behavioral Ecology*, 27(1), 219–227.

Mason, C.W., and Maxwell-Lefroy, H. (1912). *The Food of Birds in India*. Imperial Department of Agriculture, India.

Massam, M. (2001). *Common Myna*. Department of Agriculture Western Australia

Pell, A.S., and Tidemann, C.R. (1997). The ecology of the common myna in urbannature reserves in the Australian Capital Territory. *Emu-Austral Ornithology*, 97(2), 141–149.

Peneaux, C., Machovsky-Capuska, G.E., Raubenheimer, D., Lermite, F., Rousseau, C., Ruhan, T., and Griffin, A.S. (2017). Tasting novel

foods and selecting nutrient content in a highly successful ecological invader, the common myna. *Journal of Avian Biology*, 48(11), 1432–1440.

Sengupta, S. (1976). Food and feeding ecology of the common myna, *Acridotheres tristis* (Linn.). *Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy, Part B*, 42, 338–345.

Soomro, B., Ghachal, G.S., Shaikh, S.Y., and Narejo, N. (2016). Seasonal food and feeding diversification in common myna, *Acridotheres tristis*, Linnaeus, 1776 in Larkana district, Sindh, Pakistan. *Journal of Zoology Research*, 4(2), 45–52.

Whistler, H. (1949). *Popular Handbook of Indian Birds*. Gurney and Jackson, London.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
INTERPRETATION
OBSERVATION & ANALYSIS